



AETC News Clips

Randolph AFB, Texas



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Ali Times / April 7, 2006

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Air traffic controllers responsible for one third of Iraqi airspace

By Master Sgt. Jon Hanson

407th Air Expeditionary Group Public Affairs

With more than 10,000 aircraft flying through their airspace each month, the men and women of the 407th Expeditionary Operations Support Squadron's Air Traffic Control Tower and Area Control Center stay very busy.

"We are responsible for one third of Iraq – any aircraft coming in or going through," said Senior Master Sgt. Troy Hammond, 407th EOSS chief controller, who is deployed here from the South Carolina Air National Guard. "We are the second busiest radar in the AOR, with Balad being buster."

Air traffic control at Ali Base is managed by controllers in two sections – the ATC tower and the ACC radar.

The air traffic controllers in the tower are responsible for all aircraft within five miles of the airfield and all aircraft landings and takeoffs.

After they are five miles away they are turned over to the ACC which control the aircraft within



Staff Sgt. Scott Williams goes over aircraft positions before turning over the radar to Tech. Sgt. Andrew Peters at the Ali Base Area Control Center. (Photos by Master Sgt. Jon Hanson)

a 200-mile radius from the surface to 40,000 feet.

The sheer number of flights coming through the airspace can make the job interesting.

"I consider it fast paced," said Staff Sgt. Chuck Wichert, a controller at the Ali Base ATC Tower. "You have to stay on your toes no matter where you're at or what you are doing."

Being an air traffic controller in Iraq isn't much different than doing it in the United States but does have one main difference. The one limiting factor both the tower and radar controllers experience is the language barrier. While they say all the

countries coming through the airspace speak English, it can sometimes be difficult.

"Everything is pretty much standard," Sergeant Wichert said, who is deployed from Elmendorf Air Force Base, Alaska. "The only thing is getting used to the language barrier. Other than that, phraseology is almost uniform. They all speak English but just with heavy accents. They are asking for the same thing and all come in doing pretty much the same thing."

In the air traffic control tower, the job is different because their responsibility lies in getting the aircraft safely on or off the ground.

But before the aircraft gets to Ali Base the ACC crew ensures each aircraft maintains the proper altitude, direction and distance

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ATC



Staff Sgt. Nichole Heise, an air traffic controller at the Ali Base control tower ensures an aircraft's gear is up after taking off.

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ATC

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between other aircraft.

An average day for a radar controller is looking at a large radar screen for hours at a time controlling numerous aircraft transiting through their airspace.

"We are constantly busy 24-hours a day," said Senior Airman Andrena Guerra, a radar controller from the South Carolina ANG. "We have lots of missions at a time. We are at the heart of the whole mission, at least with the traffic coming in and out. If it wasn't for us here, people would be stranded."

"It gets real busy," said watch supervisor Staff Sgt. Jesus Reyes, who is deployed here from Mountain Home AFB, Idaho. "We will get anywhere between five and 25 aircraft at a time. It is real different because a lot of these guys come over here and aren't used to working traffic like that. They have been doing excel-

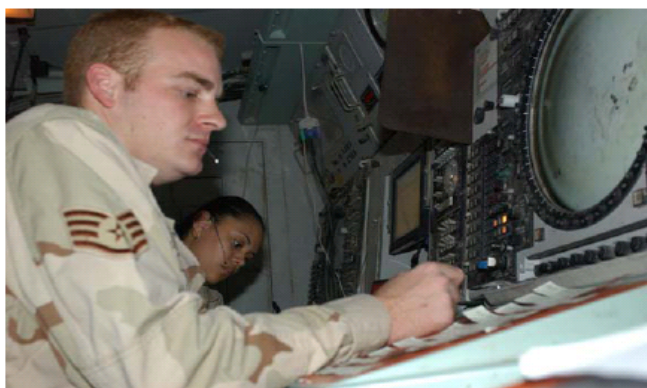
lent the whole rotation."

Having a lot of aircraft traffic doesn't bother them though.

"I love air traffic," said Sergeant Reyes. "I love getting busy. There is a stereotype of air traffic control being a real stressful job. But, for the guys who do it and do it well, they love getting busy and talking to as many aircraft as they can.

"That's why I love coming over here. Back at your home station you don't really get to talk to that many guys. It can be slow at times. When you come over here it's busy and you know what is going on with the mission.

Staff Sgt. Scott Williams agreed. "The radar facility has faster traffic. You get to be more creative directing traffic. When it gets really busy the adrenaline starts pumping. It's not like anything I've ever experienced."



Staff Sgt. Scott Williams and Senior Airman Andrena Guerra work flight requests at the Ali Base Area Control Center.

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FPASS provides extra security to Ali Base



Staff Sgt. Jennifer Simmons holds a "Desert Hawk" surveillance aircraft while Airman 1st Class Philip Crumbley prepares to connect the wing. (Photos by Master Sgt. Jon Hanson)



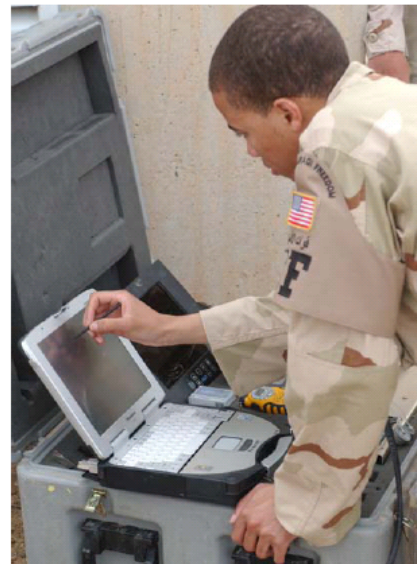
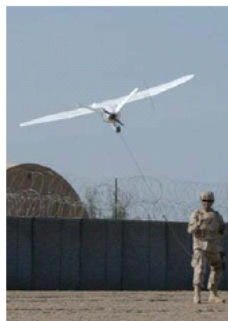
Above: Airman Crumbley secures the battery in the "Desert Hawk" prior to flight.

Right: Tech. Sgt. Anthony Horde helps launch the "Desert Hawk" using a bungee cord.

The 407th Expeditionary Security Forces Squadron uses the Force Protection Aerial Surveillance System, or FPASS, to help scan the area for possible security risks. The small remote controlled aircraft is capable of flying almost 60 miles an hour and allows security personnel to see beyond the base perimeter and adds an additional layer of protection.



Adjustments are made to the camera.



Senior Airman Jarod Johnson makes adjustments during the flight.

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Keesler AFB, Miss.



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Keesler's 81st engineers sharpen deployment skills

By MICHAEL NEWSOM

Members of Keesler's 81st Civil Engineering Squadron emergency engineer force, known as Prime Beef, got the chance to polish their deployment construction skills. The group recently held its monthly training day to freshen up the skills they would commonly use while deployed, namely building tents, according to a Keesler news release. The group built temper tents and three "strongback" tents, which are more permanent and sturdier than the temper tents. The strongbacks can function as shower units, mess halls and recreational facilities in field environments. "Teams have been known to complete this task in less than 40 minutes, using only hand tools," said Master Sgt. Jacob Peetz, heavy repair manager. The base's humanitarian mission statistics were also released last week. To date, Keesler relief workers have done 491 total missions. They handed out 122,736 MREs, 187,660 pounds of food and clothing, and 239,227 gallons of water. So far, the humanitarian work has taken 47,088 man-hours.

The Sun Herald
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Vance AFB, Okla.



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Enid News & Eagle

Vance working dogs are 'force multipliers'

April 16, 2006

By Jeff Mullin / Senior Writer

A member of the 71st Security Forces Squadron at Vance Air Force Base was on patrol on a recent afternoon, single-mindedly conducting a search.

The officer relentlessly pursued his prey, methodically and rapidly covering ground in pursuit of his objective.

Finally he found what he was looking for, picked it up and carried it away before sitting down and celebrating his find by wagging his tail.

This particular officer happened to be a four-year-old Belgian malinois, one of three military working dogs at Vance, and his objective was a black, hard rubber toy known as a Kong.

Eukay's two canine colleagues are Cini, a 2-year-old German shepherd, and Roy, a 6-year-old Belgian malinois. Each dog works with his own handler.

All three are trained in patrol work, which involves locating and subduing crime suspects.

"A dog team alone, just a handler and a dog, can search an area faster than seven officers on foot," said Staff Sgt. Andrew Odell, kennel master for Vance's military working dog unit. "We call our dog team force multipliers."

Each dog also is trained to use its sensitive nose to detect either drugs or explosives. Roy and Eukay are Vance's drug dogs, while Cini is the lone bomb dog.

"Most experts say their nose is about a thousand times stronger than ours, and some people say they're a million times stronger, it depends on who you ask," said Odell. "It's something that can't be proven."

As an example, Odell said, when you drive past McDonald's you smell french fries cooking and perhaps hamburgers.

"If the dog was in the car with you and he could talk to you, the dog would say, 'I smell french fries. I can tell you they are cooking in this type of oil. I smell meat, I smell tomato, lettuce, onion, pickles. I smell the deodorant on the guy behind the counter and I can tell you what kind of deodorant that is,'" said Odell. "They smell all that at one time and they can differentiate each individual odor and pick out that one individual owner they are trained to find."

Suspects try to mask drugs with any number of substances, Odell said, including feces.

"I've seen it all," said Odell. "No matter what you wrap your drugs in, there's always going to be a residual odor they can smell."

Vance's dogs are trained to locate "just about everything that is out there," in terms of drugs and explosives, said Odell.

In the past couple of months Vance's military working dogs have been earning their keep. Eukay and Roy have made two illegal drug finds, while Cini has assisted Enid police in searching for explosives in the wake of bomb threats at local schools.

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"One of them (the drug finds) was just a tiny bit of residue (and) was all we could find in this vehicle, which tested positive for marijuana," said Odell." But the dog was all over it."

The other find was in a house on base, in a taped-up box on top of a closet.

"It just goes to show you how good the noses are," said Odell. "He went in that room and you could tell instantly there was something in there by his body language."

The mere presence of the dogs, said 71st SFS commander Maj. Robert Rossi, can help subdue suspects.

"The dogs provide a tremendous psychological deterrent in addition to their sensing capabilities," said Rossi.

The dogs' keen sense of smell also allows them to detect potential intruders or locate suspects from a long distance away.

"From hundreds of yards away, before they can see you, or you can see them, the dog knows that somebody's there and the dog gives cues to the handler that someone's approaching," said Rossi. "That comes from sight, sound and smell."

Odell formerly was stationed at Elmendorf Air Force Base in Alaska, a large base where, he said, "you got into a lot of scuffles," as a security forces officer. But once he began working with a dog, "every time I ran into a similar situation where I would end up scuffling with somebody, those were normally quelled pretty quick because they would see the dog and nobody wants to fight with a dog."

It takes about two months for a dog and a handler to get comfortable working together, Odell said.

"What's really got to be built there is the rapport between the dog and handler," he added. "They have to learn each other's quirks, learn each other's speeds and, essentially, what each other thinks."

Methods of handling dogs, Odell said, are as individual as the dogs and handlers themselves.

"Being a jet mechanic, there's one way to fix an engine," said Odell. "Being a dog handler, you use any method you can think of. It really encourages outside-the-box thinking. I spend every day thinking of the craziest, most bizarre methods to get my dog to do a new task."

Vance's dog teams must be certified by the 71st Mission Support Group commander after he observes them going through an exercise and locating a source of illegal drugs or explosives.

Handlers and their dogs train constantly, Odell said.

They do at least four detection problems, finding drugs or explosives, each month and work on subduing a suspect once a week.

Dogs are trained using only positive reinforcement, reward and praise, said Odell, no punishment.

"It's nothing but positive," said Odell. "People get the misconception that we abuse the animals, we hit the animals when they do badly. Not in my kennel. You always get a stronger dog when you use a positive reinforcement system."

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Dogs and handlers, Odell said, become “phenomenally close,” which makes it hard when a handler is transferred to another base. The dogs stay behind.

“It’s heartbreaking,” said Odell.

Dogs and handlers can be deployed overseas together or sent to perform missions for the Secret Service, which usually involve sweeping a building for explosives prior to the arrival of a dignitary.

The Air Force pays between \$1,500 and \$3,000 for each working dog. Over the course of its life, some \$30,000 will be spent on the dog.

The dogs are examined by a veterinarian quarterly and get two dental examinations each year.

“These dogs have better health care than those of us in this room,” said Odell, chuckling.

The average German shepherd works until he is 8 to 10 years old, Odell said, while Belgian malinois can work until they are 10 to 12 years old.

When the dogs can no longer work they can be returned to the dog training school and used to train younger dogs, they can be adopted or, in case of extreme health problems, they will be destroyed.

One of the two dogs in Odell’s home is Avis, who is a former Vance AFB working dog who retired with bad knees.

Vance security forces serve, protect and defend

April 16, 2006

By Jeff Mullin / Senior Writer

One day they could be making a routine traffic stop on Elam Road in the middle of Vance Air Force Base, while the next they could be on their way to Iraq or Afghanistan. The members of the 71st Security Forces Squadron at Vance have to be prepared for either eventuality.

Currently, 12 members of the 71st SFS are deployed to Iraq and Kyrgyzstan.

That leaves the rest of the nearly 100 military and civilian members of the squadron to protect the more than 2,500 people who live and work within the gates at Vance, as well as the base’s 698 facilities and more than 200 aircraft.

Normally, some 20 percent of the 71st SFS personnel are deployed, a figure squadron commander Maj. Robert Rossi called “typical of security forces throughout the Air Force.”

“We train and prepare to defend air bases throughout the world on a moment’s notice, wherever the Department of Defense or the Air Force ask us to go,” said Rossi. “We have to be ready not only to defend Vance but any other base that we’re tasked to.”

Security forces, Rossi said, is a “high demand” Air Force career field.

“You might not need an F-16 mechanic at every base in the AOR (area of responsibility),” said Rossi, “because there might not be F-16s. But certainly you need security personnel at every base.”

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Vance annually trains more than 410 student pilots. Enabling that training to continue without interruption is the mission of the 71st SFS.

"We maintain the environment that allows those operations to continue without any intrusions or delays," said Rossi. "We guard and protect the base and the people who live here so they can do their job."

The 71st SFS patrols the perimeter of the base to keep unauthorized people out. On the base, security forces troops enforce traffic laws, including a new Department of Defense ruling banning cell phone use, except hands-free devices, while driving on military facilities.

The Vance security forces work closely with local civilian law enforcement agencies. Recently a high-speed chase involving Enid Police Department and Oklahoma Highway Patrol units took place near the base. Vance security troops didn't take part in the chase but used surveillance cameras at the gates to monitor the situation.

"I was on the phone with the Enid police folks telling them what we were seeing," said Rossi. "We were ready so that if the person did exit their vehicle, we have great capability not only with our surveillance devices but with our dogs to find people."

The 71st SFS can't enforce civil laws, but can provide assistance to local law enforcement agencies when it is requested.

"We can provide assistance to save life or property as the commander sees fit," said Rossi, "or provide training and support when the local community does not have that capability."

A recent example came when bomb threats were made against Enid schools and a Vance bomb dog and handler were sent to check the buildings for explosives.

The 71st SFS has exclusive jurisdiction over anyone on most of the base, either military or civilian. In the Vance housing area, however, the Vance cops have only proprietary jurisdiction.

"If we have an issue in housing, we really need the Enid Police Department's help," said Staff Sgt. Andrew Odell, kennel master for the 71st SFS' military working dogs. "We do work a lot together."

Recently illegal drugs were found in the base housing area, but the suspect was a civilian.

"Because we have jurisdiction we were able to detain that person and hold them legally until we could get the proper authorities out there," said Odell.

Vance has no jail but has an agreement with Garfield County to hold military prisoners in the county detention facility.

If military members are arrested in Enid or other area towns, the 71st SFS can expect to get a phone call.

"They'll hold them for us until we can go," said Rossi. "The SJA (Staff Judge Advocate) will work with that jurisdiction to release them."

Because of the "great relationship we have with the community," Rossi said, civilian law enforcement officials normally release military prisoners to Vance security forces.

"They have confidence that the military is going to act swiftly and take action against

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that person," Rossi said.

Civilians caught violating traffic laws on base and receiving a ticket must take their case to magistrate's court in Oklahoma City.

Since early 2005 Vance's gates have been manned by civilian security guards employed by Computer Sciences Corp., the base's primary contractor.

"I have 35 contractors who provide excellent security for our base," said Rossi.

Vance's security forces personnel receive training in law enforcement, firearms and tactics. They receive 65 duty days of technical training before being assigned to the squadron, then get two weeks of intense training about operations in the local area. Throughout the year they spend many hours drilling and training as part of their jobs. Most have little or no previous law enforcement experience.

"It's a fast learning process," said Odell. "They have a certain time period when they have to become certified as a patrolman. They actually have 45 working days to learn everything there is to know about their job when they get here. It's basically a throw them in the pool, start swimming type of thing."

"They don't know what they are dealing with when they pull someone over," said Rossi.

"So they have this sense they have to deal with every person, whether it's grandma or a guy who may have just robbed a bank and ended up on the base. They have to deal the same way, they have to be professional, they have to be quick on their feet and be able to make decisions and be ready to go."



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The Oklahoman/News9

Plane carrying lieutenant governor in near miss with Vance trainer

April 15, 2006

By The Associated Press (Enid News & Eagle on Sunday, April 16, 2005)

OKLAHOMA CITY - An airplane carrying Lt. Gov. Mary Fallin and her staff to a turkey hunt in northwest Oklahoma was required to take evasive action to avoid a collision with a military aircraft on a training flight from Vance Air Force Base in Enid, Fallin's staff said.

"We dove and we came back up," Fallin spokesman Tony Vann told the Tulsa World's Capitol bureau.

Fallin's state airplane, a Beechcraft King Air 350, was carrying seven passengers and two pilots between Okemah and Woodward at the time of the incident Thursday, Vann said.

"Miscommunications occurred, causing the planes to cross too close to one another," said Lt. Nicole Poff, a public affairs officer with Vance.

She said that "too close" usually means planes that come within 500 feet of one another, she said.

Oklahoma Highway Patrol Maj. Mike Grimes said a trainee air traffic controller at Vance gave the military pilot incorrect information about the direction of travel of the state plane.

An automatic system installed last year on the state plane and the pilots' visual sighting of the other plane helped them avoid it, Grimes said. Such an incident "is unusual," he said.

Poff said Vance conducted an inquiry into the incident and no one was disciplined.

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